

HINTS PROPOSAL

Proposed Title: Evaluating the Accuracy of Smoking Risk Perceptions

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Research questions:

Examples of the questions we will examine are:

1. Do smokers, former smokers, and nonsmokers realize the extent to which smoking increases the risk of lung cancer? Do they overestimate the curability of lung cancer?
2. Do smokers show unrealistic optimism, believing that their own risk is less than that of other smokers?
3. How many smokers agree with various myths about smoking?
4. To what extent is smoking incorporated into perceptions of overall cancer risk?
5. How do answers to the preceding and similar question vary as a function of smoking number of cigarettes smoked?

Study description/rationale:

The results of many studies suggest that smokers tend to underestimate the risks of smoking. Although most studies also find that smokers tend to claim that they are less at risk than other smokers, some do not. The strongest test of this personal exclusion phenomenon would come by having different people answer questions about themselves or about other smokers, but not both questions. We are not aware that any existing study has collected such data, but HINTS has such a design. Furthermore, very little of the risk perception data comes from representative, national surveys, so an analysis of these questions from HINTS will address this limitation in our current knowledge.

Variable list:

- TU15 average smoker's absolute risk of lung cancer on verbal scale
- TU 16 own absolute risk of lung cancer on verbal scale
- TU17 curability of lung cancer
- TU18 average smoker's relative risk of lung cancer on numerical scale
- TU19 own relative risk of lung cancer on numerical scale
- TU9a-d Myths about avoiding smoking risks
- CK1 relative deaths due to smoking compared to other hazards
- CK8 own risk of cancer on absolute verbal scale
- CK9 own worry about cancer

Independent variables would be:

smoking status: current, former, never; cigs/day

demographic variables: such as gender, age, education, ethnicity

Method of analysis:

We expect to use a variety of analysis techniques and statistics, including t-tests, nonparametric analyses, correlations, and simple frequency counts. The principal independent variables will be smoking status and smoking pattern, though demographic variables will also be included. The dependent variables will be the smoking risk perception measures.

References:

Weinstein, N. D. (2001). Smokers' recognition of their vulnerability to harm. In P. Slovic (Ed.), Smoking: Risk, perception, and policy, pp. 81-96. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Targeted Journal: (if known)

An appropriate journal would be *Nicotine and Tobacco Research*
